



Plant Chat

A Quarterly Publication from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center
to the NRCS Field Offices in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota

Fall 2004

Volume 4, Issue 4

<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

Seed Alert—Wildrye Mixup!!

There has been a wildrye mixup in the seed trade. Seed of Dahurian wildrye *Elymus dahuricus* (introduced species) is being sold as Canada wildrye *Elymus canadensis* (native species). The processed (de-awned)



seed of the two species look very similar. Plants with seed heads are easy to tell apart because of the longer awn and nodding seed head of the Canada wildrye. Seed heads of Dahurian wildrye are erect and have shorter awns (see photo above). Buyer beware! If you are purchasing Canada wildrye, consider certified seed of Mandan Canada wildrye which is a released variety well-adapted to this region. If you purchased common seed of Canada wildrye in the last year or two, you may want to do some follow-up to make sure it is not Dahurian wildrye. Dahurian wildrye is introduced from Asia and is an easy to establish, short-lived bunchgrass with growth and performance characteristics similar to Canada wildrye.

Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist

Chokecherry for Field Plantings

Are you interested in trying some new chokecherry selections? The PMC is looking for six field planting sites in each state to test Amur chokecherry and a new selection of common chokecherry. The plants of common chokecherry were grown from a seed source first collected by Bob Bauer in 1979 in Sheridan County, ND. The plants have shown good vigor, disease resistance, and high fruit production in PMC evaluations.

The Amur chokecherry is a small tree with a single stem, rather than a multi-stemmed shrub. The Amur chokecherry has white flowers and coppery-orange bark which curls like birch tree bark as it ages. It is non-suckering. The origin of this species is the Amur River Valley, which, for 1,000 miles, forms a natural boundary between Russia and China.

Mike Knudson, Forester



White Sage Now Available

Sweetgrass continues to be popular as a culturally significant plant requested from the PMC. It is available in 2005 for demonstration and special plantings. Native white sage, also known as prairie sage or cudweed sage, will also be available next year. This strongly aromatic forb species is one of the most widely used plants for ceremonial purposes by Native Americans. The source is a vegetative composite of plants collected on or near five reservations in the three-state area. White sage spreads aggressively from rhizomes and can become locally invasive. Cooperators will be limited to ten plants each. The sweetgrass and white sage will be shipped as rooted plants in individual small containers.

Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist

White sage at the
Plant Materials Center

